

Run the Race

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[0 : 0 0] well good morning everyone as the kids just settle in here i want to just again introduce us to this new series we're going to be doing for the next five weeks from hebrews 11 and 12 where we'll hear about some pilgrims from scripture and these are men and women who according to hebrews 11 walked with god by faith and we hear about people like abraham and sarah who were actually seeking a homeland they were actually seeking the city prepared for them by god and these pilgrims are part of the great cloud of witnesses which we hear about in today's reading but we're not going to begin with abraham or sarah or mooses or david we're actually going to begin today with jesus because our whole christian life from beginning middle and end is centered on jesus but first i invite you to join me in praying father open our hearts and minds to hear your word with faith and understanding strengthen us to run the race you have set before us looking always to your son jesus amen so if you have a bible it would be helpful to turn to hebrews 12 verses 1 to 3 and there are three exhortations or appeals in this short passage first lay aside every burden and sin that weighs you down second run with endurance the race that is set before us and third consider jesus christ and notice something from christ and christian life is not something that is still or static or stationary in our last series the apostle peter described christians as exiles or pilgrims in the world and if we think of ourselves in that way as exiles wandering in the wilderness our greatest need is not a sheltered oasis where we can settle down and make a home in the desert we also don't need to embrace our wandering as if being unsettled is actually the purpose or point of life what we need as exiles is a road that will lead us home we need a way out of the desert into the beautiful abundant life-giving safe city of our king and that is what we receive in the gospel in the gospel we're promised a home with god and we're actually showing the way home in jesus christ so to run this race well the first thing we have to do is lay aside the burdens and sins that hold us back now despite what i said in the kids talk unless i'm chasing my kid down the street you probably won't find me running very long distances these days honestly i don't enjoy long distance running it's hard especially if you don't do it often like me it's even harder if you're carrying a heavy weight on your back and the writer of hebrews uses this metaphor to describe the distractions and sins that hold us back as we try to follow christ if we try to run carrying our burdens we will not make it to the finish line at least not in one piece and we can only lay aside these burdens by looking to jesus this brings us back to john bunyan's brilliant illustration from the pilgrim's progress when christian leaves the city of destruction he has this heavy burden strapped to his back and when when he tries

to remove it it actually only becomes heavier more burdensome but as he approaches a cross with a tomb below it his burden is taken from him and it actually rolls into the tomb and we never see it again listen to what bunyan said it was the sight of the cross that accomplished the release of christian's burden our culturally trained intuitions and instincts would try to tell us that peace and fulfillment come from looking inward to find our true self and embracing those desires we find within us but the gospel actually points us outside of ourselves to the promise of god's grace and the finished work of christ and until we grasp this basic truth of the gospel that peace and freedom are found by looking outside of ourselves to christ to his strength and power and grace our pilgrimage toward the city of god will always be weary and tiresome like running a marathon with an anchor strapped to our waist so we first look to christ to relieve our burden of sin but even after we are free and running the race we can't take our eyes off of him he is not only the founder of our faith he is the perfecter of it and he's the one who sustains us as we run did you notice in verse 2 that we are told to run with endurance the race that is set before us god calls his people not only to run but to run a particular race on a particular path people in the western world know how to run especially in vancouver people's lives are fast-paced frenetic and generally overwhelming the world is not only to run a path of life but to run a path of life but to run a path of life despite having access to more material wealth more technological innovation than any other time and place in history people in our culture are increasingly anxious stressed depressed and generally discontent we are running at a breakneck speed but we have no path or destination in mind the christian philosopher jamie smith says that we're not pilgrims we're wanderers we feel a sense of alienation or discontentment in the world but instead of seeking a true home we convince ourselves that the road is home and as he says we revel or rejoice in our roaming that's why the author of hebrews tells us to fix our eyes on jesus because always running with nowhere to go can only lead to chaos anxiety and fatigue we are called as christians to run home and to look to christ who will be waiting at the finish line to welcome us home to the city of god which is the goal of our faith this isn't easy our pilgrimage is a marathon not a sprint maybe even one of those ultra marathons like those desert races that only 10 or 15 people in the world can complete and that means there's times when we will feel weary tired or want to turn back there's nothing to be ashamed of in this if you speak with someone in this room who has been walking with jesus for a long time i can guarantee you that

they've experienced this at some point or another but that's why we need the third and final appeal from this passage consider jesus day by day week by week year by year consider jesus he is the one who relieves our burden of sin he is the one who will ensure we make it to the finish line and he is the one who for the joy that was set before him endured the hostility of the cross and is now seated at the right hand of god the father and boys and girls i'll be finishing up in one minute if you want to wrap up your art it looks wonderful and here's really the point of all this jesus is the perfect pilgrim jesus is the perfect pilgrim he is our best example of what it means to live by faith and to walk with god but he is much more than that he's not merely our example he is actually our conquering king and our compassionate priest he's an infinite well of hope and strength for those who are weary or faint-hearted so as we begin this new series considering men and women who have made this pilgrimage of faith before us we first need to fix our eyes on jesus and prepare to run the race that he has set before us looking to him every step of the way amen